

We can place special burdens on national vessels only if we are willing to revive the outworn system of special privileges and immunities to national vessels, or to replace it with a system of generous subsidies. It is generally agreed, however, that this latter alternative is now politically unfeasible, even if it were economically sound. A half-hearted mail subvention is all that we have achieved in this direction, and its results have not been encouraging. Moreover, the most ardent advocates of ship sub-

sidy have never considered it practicable to subsidize tramp steamers, which now carry two-thirds of the traffic on the trade routes of the world. As long as the flag remains the handle by which governmental pressure is exerted on ocean shipping, a policy of *laissez faire* is the only one possible. If there are social aims to be achieved by regulating the shipping which carries our foreign trade, we must find some other basis of jurisdiction than a vessel's nationality.

GERARD HENDERSON.

Labor's Part in England's War

IN a recent issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC an editorial writer, speaking of the effect of the war upon the working class in England, remarks: "It is generally admitted that the war has cost the workers of England, at least temporarily, much of the gains of a century of struggle," adding, in still more pessimistic vein, that "the system of free labor is yielding to a system of forced labor." These statements seem to show that the atmosphere of our labor situation is not fully understood across the Atlantic. It is worth while attempting briefly to clear up the facts to which they refer, for as they stand, the words do the work-people of England a serious injustice, both by the suggestion that they are not able to safeguard their liberties, and by the implication that the extra work now being demanded of them in many industries is not a wholehearted contribution to the Allied cause.

The central fact about the working class, as about every other section of the English community at the present moment, is the desire to help to win the war.

This is equally true, paradoxical as it may appear, of the great mass of the Welsh miners. Although the "class struggle" is bitterer and more self-conscious in the South Wales valleys than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, and the elements of character and temperament are more inflammable there, it must not be forgotten that the recent disputes only came to a head after the masters had refused the men's offer to refrain from putting forward their demand for a new agreement provided the owners undertook not to advance coal prices to the public. Not selfishness but resentment at capitalist war-profits was at the bottom of the Welsh, as of the other recent disputes.

There is not the slightest division of feeling between the working class and the rest of the nation on this point. The war has gripped the mass of the people as no war, not even the great civil war, has ever gripped them before. Our three-million army of volunteers is not an upper-class army: it is mainly a working-class army, an army of the common peo-

ple, the most formidable fighting force, not only in numbers but in spirit, which this country has ever produced. These men from working-class homes do not all know what they are fighting for in Europe—our national neglect of the study of foreign affairs cannot be remedied in a few months—but they know very well what they are fighting against, and the presence of Belgian refugees and the continual toll of non-combatant victims on merchant ships and fishing-boats and in east-coast towns prevents them from forgetting it. It would be a great mistake to judge of the depth of English feeling by the matter-of-fact, unsentimental, and apparently unimaginative way in which the body of the public seems to be taking the war. "Every one of these islanders is himself an island," said Emerson of the English, and the saying is true of all classes to-day.

Moreover, the link between the army and the working people at home is a very close one, and is kept alive not only by correspondence but by the continual return of the wounded and of men on leave, and by visits of labor leaders to the front. If the connection between the factory and the firing-line was not fully appreciated in the early months of the war, when "business as usual" was preached us from above, this phase has long since passed away. Workmen know that their labor is needed, not simply to keep the wheels of industry running or to supply some important market demand, but because the existence of their country depends on it. For the first time since the growth of capitalism divorced the producer from the consumer and substituted the cold cash-nexus for the old sense of mutual service and obligation, workmen feel that, in Ruskin's phrase, they are providers for the nation. They have suddenly realized that they are not mere cogs in a soulless machine, but indispensable ministers to the nation's need. This has not only given them a new consciousness of their power, it has added new dignity to their work and given them a new interest in its details and processes.

The war, then, so far from throwing the work-

ing class back into "forced labor," has given a powerful fillip to the growth of industrial democracy, and brought great new opportunities within the range of labor statesmanship. When the industrial aspect of the war first began to be realized by the Government the Under-Secretary for War went so far as to appeal to the trade-union leaders to "organize the forces of labor." Nothing came of the invitation, which went far beyond the powers or even the dreams of English trade-union leadership. But in the subsequent arrangements which were made to increase the output of munitions, no important step was taken without consulting the various trade unions affected. For the first time in English history labor and capital were equally consulted by the state as being equal partners in the control of industry, and labor was able to make its own terms in return for the concessions asked from it by the Government. Under the Munitions of War act of last June, which embodied the result of these consultations among the three parties, labor agreed to compulsory arbitration in the munition trades, and to the temporary suspension of any trade-union rule "which tends to restrict production or employment," in return for the limitation of profits in all workshops where these arrangements are statutorily in force, a state guarantee for the reintroduction of all suspended rules after the war, and labor representation on the local committees and tribunals set up in connection with the act.

It is of course possible to maintain, as is done by a recent writer who has detailed the facts at length ("Labor in Wartime," by G. D. H. Cole, London), that labor statesmanship has failed to rise to the level of its opportunity. From a detached and philosophic, as also from a narrowly "class-conscious," standpoint this is no doubt true. Certainly the opportunity has been unparalleled. Never since the Black Death has the demand for labor been so great, or have so many masters been running after one man. If the trade unions had chosen to adopt capitalist standards of bargaining they could have made far better terms. Or if they had chosen to make a bid for industrial control and shown themselves equal to the constructive work and responsibilities which such a policy would have involved, they could have secured a far greater permanent improvement in their status. But they did not do so, probably because neither course occurred to them. If it was legitimate for contractors in previous wars to exact the full market value of the commodity, or monopoly, they happened to control, labor might have pleaded the same excuse for putting a monopoly price on its services. But patriotism led it to create a better precedent, though in fact the wiping out of unemployment and the widespread employment of women, coupled with the

state grants to the dependents of them serving in the forces, has certainly raised the standard of living in many quarters, especially in the agricultural districts and among the poorly paid and unorganized urban workers. As for a more positive policy towards industrial democracy, the failure to put it forward simply reflects the state of mind of the leaders of the trade-union movement, who have no definitive objective in view, but simply move from point to point as the public men in England are wont to do.

Moreover, public opinion does not readily turn to new social experiments in wartime, and there has been a general feeling against playing for sectional advantages. It is always deplorable to see a chance of constructive development missed, but there is only one remedy, a better education for the adult working class. In this respect the war has in fact come a generation too early. Had it come twenty years later it would have found the working class better educated, more skilfully organized, and intellectually prepared under university-trained leaders to face the industrial emergency. It would have found men knowing what they wanted, not simply what they would not have. But democracy is a plant of slow growth, and England is suffering to-day, and will continue to suffer, for having postponed compulsory education till 1870, and the attempt to put university education within the reach of adult work-people till within the last few years.

The lost opportunities, however, have not all been on the side of labor. The Government has indeed been the chief offender. It has been faced with the difficult problem of putting a democratic society upon a war basis, and it has not got through this unprecedented task without many mistakes, both of omission and commission. A democratic government cannot afford to neglect public opinion. The Government has indeed never entirely neglected it, but being an upper-class government it has often failed to understand it. Two instances only can be given here. One was the failure to deal with the prices of food and coal, a measure which public opinion regarded as the natural sequel to the steps taken early in the war to protect the bankers and the Stock Exchange; the Government's *non possumus* (since reversed in the case of coal) seemed to work-people a departure from the principle of fair play and caused widespread irritation. The other was the misguided attempt to apply by special proclamation the Compulsory Arbitration clause of the Munitions act to the Welsh miners, whose consent—unlike that of the munition trades—had not been secured to it. This must have seemed to outsiders to discredit the whole policy of the Munitions act: in reality it justified it, as the exception proves the rule.

It is perhaps true that there has been more overt friction between the Government and the working class in England during the war than in any other of the belligerent countries. This is not due to the fact that the Government has been more tyrannical, but to the exact opposite. It is due to the stubborn independence of Englishmen and to the self-governing traditions of English life. On the Continent it may be possible to impose drastic industrial regulations on the working population, and to dispense with the cumbrous but democratic processes of consultation, deliberation and persuasion. In England it is not so. Englishmen are open to argument, and they respond eagerly to good leadership; but they suffer no driving. And it is the very qualities which have led to so much seeming friction and confusion at home—the old Puritan leaven of vigorous independence and deep resentment against injustice and tyrannical domination—which have sent so many thousands of dogged fighters into the field and will bring us through in the end.

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Impressions of a Plattsburg Recruit

IT is a mistake to suppose that a soldier's impedimenta are merely accessory. From the time when you first gratefully borrow them from the ordnance and quartermaster's tents to the time when you still more thankfully deliver them up, you revolve about them. In place of the ordinary organic sensations, they supply while you possess them the nucleus of the consciousness of self. Though much is made of the ceremony, there is really no credit in returning these objects to the United States Government. The real merit is in borrowing them at all. This is perhaps the bravest act a soldier is called upon to perform. There are, let it be understood, some twenty-five separate articles in this borrowed equipment, including half a shelter tent, one rifle, one canteen, one poncho, five pegs, etc., and to these one is ordered to add articles of toilet and personal apparel, bringing the total number to over thirty. These, when once you have put them together, you acquire as a part of yourself, like a permanent hump. They *might* be folded, hooked and strapped together in a thousand ways; they *must* be folded, hooked and strapped together in one way, and in only one way. And then they must be taken apart again, and combined anew for each day's journey; which is one of the most successful of the several standard devices for protecting the soldier from the corrupting influence of leisure.

When you advance upon an imaginary enemy,

your corporal, whom you have learned to watch as a dog his master, shouts "Follow me!" You are wearing your hump, with its various outlying parts, such as the rifle in your hand and the canteen on your hip. By bending your body until your back is parallel with the ground, you are able to simulate running. The gait as well as the contour resembles the camel's; but alas! you enjoy no such natural adaptation for pack-bearing, nor for the rude contacts with earth that await you. For after loping forward some twenty-five yards, you are ordered to "lie down."

This is not to be construed as an invitation to enjoy a well-earned rest. On the contrary your torture is about to begin. In civilian life it is customary when lying down to select some spot or object which yields slightly to the pressure of the body, or corresponds somewhat to its outlines. But in skirmish formation you lie down in your place; if you are a rear-rank man, then half a pace to the right of your file-leader. The chances are one hundred to one that the spot fits you very badly. Nevertheless, down you go. You then hoist up on your left elbow, and address your rifle in the direction of the enemy. Your whole consciousness is now concentrated in the elbow. This member, which was never intended as an extremity, rests in all likelihood upon a rough-edged piece of granite separated from your bone by one thickness of flannel shirt. The rifle presses mercilessly upon it. Your pack, thrown forward in your fall, rests upon the back of your neck, adds itself to the weight upon your elbow, and renders it almost impossible—judged by civilian standards, altogether impossible—to look along the sights of your rifle. The pain in the elbow is soon followed by a sharp cramp in the wrist. When these parts have become sufficiently numb for you to attend to minor discomforts, you begin to realize that you are lying on your bolo knife, and that your canteen is sticking into your right hip.

At this moment the platoon leader orders you to "fire faster," and with a desperate contortion you reach around to the small of your back and grope for a slip of cartridges with which to reload your rifle. Then "Cease firing!" "Prepare to rush!" and again "Follow me!"—this time not only *to* a prone position, but *from* a prone position. You are carefully enjoined that you must get up running and lie down running, lest you shall at any time present a fixed target to the enemy. You dig a hold with your foot, summon your last reserves of strength, totter forward with all your goods hanging, dangling, dragging about you, and soon resume business with that elbow exactly where you left off. This is called "advancing by rushes," and it is customary to do it for distances of a thousand yards or more in instalments of fifty yards or less. It